

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 SS-20 NSC-10 L-03

H-03 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15 DOTE-00 SPC-03 SAM-01 EPA-04

CEQ-02 SCI-06 DRC-01 /141 W  
----- 042090

P R 261612Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8258

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, SENV, UK, FR

SUBJ: CIVAIR - CONCORDE

REF: LONDON 2476

1. CONCORDE PROJECT HAS CONTINUED TO TAKE A BATTERING IN THE BRITISH PRESS IN RECENT DAYS. IN AN OPINION POLL CONDUCTED BY BUSINESS DECISIONS LTD. ON FEB. 14 AND PUBLISHED IN OBSERVER FEB. 24, 46 PERCENT OF THOSE QUESTIONED INDICATED THEY BELIEVE CONCORDE PROJECT SHOULD BE CANCELLED WHILE 35 PERCENT FAVORED CONTINUATION (19 PERCENT DON'T KNOWS). RESULTS OF THIS POLL CONTRAST SHARPLY WITH POLL CONDUCTED IN SUMMER 1969 (LAST PREVIOUS CONCORDE POLL TO OUR KNOWLEDGE) WHICH SHOWED 63 PERCENT OF MEN AND 51 PERCENT OF WOMEN QUESTIONED FAVORED CONCORDE AND LESS THAN ONE QUARTER OF ALL POLLED WANTED PROJECT STOPPED. NEW POLL IS ALMOST BOUND TO STRENGTHEN HAND OF OFFICIALS IN ALL THREE POLITICAL PARTIES WHO FAVOR SCRAPPING

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CONCORDE IN LIGHT OF UK'S ECONOMIC SITUATION AND

AIRCRAFT'S POOR COMMERCIAL PROSPECTS.

2. LONG TIME CORCORDE CRITIC, ANDREW WILSON, DELIVERED ANOTHER BROADSIDE AGAINST CONCORDE IN OBSERVER OF FEB. 24. IN ARTICLE TITLED "WHY CONCORDE MUST DIE," WILSON OPENS WITH QUESTION "HOW MUCH LONGER MUST WE GO ON PAYING 10 MILLION POUNDS A MONTH TO BUILD A SUPERSONIC AIRLINER THAT NO FOREIGN AIRLINE WILL BUY, AND WHICH MAY NOT NOW EVEN FLY ON THE SUBSIDIZED SERVICE OF BRITISH AIRWAYS AND AIR FRANCE?" HE CONCLUDES WITH COMMENT:

QUOTE. IT IS NOW SAID THAT THE FUEL-HUNGRY CONCORDE HAS BEEN FINISHED BY THE ENERGY CRISIS. THIS IS NOT TRUE. IT WAS DOOMED LONG BEFORE BY ITS PRICE, NOISE, RANGE AND PROHIBITIVE OPERATING COSTS. BUT THE RISE IN OIL PRICES, WHICH HAS ALREADY DOUBLED THE EXPECTED SUPERSONIC SURCHARGE (PUTTING CONCORDE FARES 30 PERCENT ABOVE SUBSONIC FIRST CLASS FARES) OFFERS ANY BRITISH GOVERNMENT A FACE-SAVING FORMULA FOR GETTING OUT.

NO GOVERNMENT THAT ASKS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY IN A NATIONAL ECONOMIC CRISIS CAN AFFORD TO MISS THE CHANCE. UNQUOTE.

2. SUNDAY TIMES OF FEB. 24 SAYS THAT UNNAMED AVIATION EXPERTS ARE CONVINCED FRENCH, IN PROPOSING INSTALLATION OF EXTRA FUEL TANK, HAVE CHOSEN WORST POSSIBLE OPTION SINCE INCREASE IN FUEL CAPACITY CAN TAKE PLACE ONLY AT EXPENSE OF REDUCED PASSENGER PAYLOAD MAKING AIRCRAFT EVEN MORE UNECONOMIC. NEWSPAPER CLAIMS BRITISH AIRWAYS RESEARCH INTO WILLINGNESS OF COMPANIES TO PAY HIGH CONCORDE FARES HAS BROUGHT DISAPPOINTING RESULTS.

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3. LONDON TIMES REPORT FROM TOKYO QUOTES  
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR OF JAPANESE CAB, NAKAMURA  
AS SAYING JCAB IS EXAMINING QUESTION OF SST FLIGHTS  
BUT IT UNLIKELY JAPANESE WILL ALLOW SSTs TO LAND AT  
TOKYO. TIMES ALSO REPORTS THAT LUFTHANSA HAS RULED OUT  
CONCORDE OPERATIONS, EVEN IF ITS RANGE IS EXTENDED,  
BECAUSE OF HIGH FUEL COSTS.

4. COMMENT. IN ITS TURBULENT 12-YEAR HISTORY,  
CONCORDE HAS WEATHERED MANY POLITICAL STORMS. IN OUR  
VIEW, HOWEVER, NONE HAS BEEN AS SERIOUS AS THE PRESENT  
CRISIS. THE COMBINATION OF LACK OF ORDERS FOR THE  
AIRCRAFT AND THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC SITUATION FACING  
THE COUNTRY WILL FORCE ANY NEW GOVERNMENT AFTER THE  
ELECTIONS, WHATEVER ITS POLITICAL COMPLEXION, TO  
UNDERTAKE A PAINFUL REEXAMINATION OF ITS COMMITMENT  
TO THE PROJECT. WHILE WE WOULD JUDGE THAT THE ODDS  
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AT THIS TIME ARE STILL AGAINST AN OUTRIGHT  
CANCELLATION OF BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT,  
THESE ODDS ARE SHIFTING AND ONE CANNOT RULE IT OUT  
AS A REAL POSSIBILITY. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE  
BELIEVE IT WOULD BE VERY UNWISE ON THE PART OF THE  
USG TO TAKE ANY ACTION, NO MATTER HOW MODERATE,  
WHICH MIGHT BE JUDGED TO AFFECT ADVERSELY CONCORDE'S  
PROSPECTS UNTIL WE SEE HOW PRESENT UNCERTAINTIES ARE  
RESOLVED.

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## Message Attributes

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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
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